

20th Legislative District

2007 Legislative Review



Rep. Gary Alexander



Rep. Richard DeBolt

Dear friends and neighbors,

The 2007 legislative session was a challenge, as we worked to protect the interests of taxpayers. With one party controlling both chambers of the Legislature, as well as the governor's office, there was little opportunity for bipartisan input into how the taxpayers' money could be protected and used most efficiently.

In the end, majority Democrats adopted a double-digit spending increase in the state operating budget, resulting in a 33 percent increase in spending since Gov. Gregoire took office in 2005. State spending is increasing at nearly twice the rate of household incomes. That's unfair to working families and a recipe for tax increases or major cuts in services.

While it was a disappointing session in many respects, there were several accomplishments on behalf of our 20th District communities. This newsletter provides a summary of the Legislature's work. As always, we welcome your questions and ideas as we work together to create opportunities, protection and prosperity for the families of Washington.

Best regards,

Handwritten signature of Gary Alexander in blue ink.

Gary Alexander
State Representative

Handwritten signature of Richard DeBolt in blue ink.

Richard DeBolt
State Representative

How can we help?

Although the Legislature is no longer in session this year, we never stop serving as your representatives. If you have questions or need assistance in your dealings with state government, do not hesitate to contact us. We are glad to help.

Rep. Richard DeBolt

Legislative Building 335C
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7896
Debolt.richard@leg.wa.gov
Web site: <http://www.houserepublicans.wa.gov/DeBolt/>

Rep. Gary Alexander

John L. O'Brien Bldg. 407
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7990
Alexander.gary@leg.wa.gov
Web site: <http://www.houserepublicans.wa.gov/Alexander/>

Toll-Free Legislative Hotline: 1-800-562-6000

• Reps. Alexander and DeBolt • 2007 Legislative Review

More talk than action on key issues

Legislature not in a mood to adopt bold reforms

With Democrats holding sizable majorities in the House and Senate and controlling the governor's mansion, you'd expect clear priorities and decisive action. Instead, the Legislature's handling of important issues was disappointing.

Transportation, health care solutions left for another day

Signs of a lackluster session were evident early on when the governor punted on replacing the Alaskan Way Viaduct. Hundreds of millions of dollars were appropriated to tear down the viaduct, but there is still no plan to fix it. The same leaders who couldn't agree before assure us they're working on a solution. They just need a few more years.



Education priorities: sex-ed curriculum, but no math curriculum

Republicans worked in good faith and presented bipartisan solutions to address education needs.

We proposed Fund Education First – a budgeting approach that would help ensure proper financing for basic education and take our kids out of competition with other state services for funding.

We fought to protect rigorous standards for math achievement and the development of a statewide math curriculum. Instead, the Legislature approved a statewide curriculum for sex education – another indication of the misguided priorities this session.

When in doubt, create a study

In 2005, the governor and Legislature did what they do best and created a task force to set a "bold" new course for education. After spending 18 months and \$1.7 million, the governor concluded she needs two more years to create a plan to fund schools. The 2007 session produced – you guessed it – another study group, to study the earlier study on an issue that has been studied countless times before.

The critical issue of health care was addressed in a similar fashion. Last year the governor formed the Blue Ribbon Commission on Health Care, again with the expectation of building consensus on bold, new reforms. Yet none of the recommendations to address costs and provide affordable health care options for families was adopted. Instead, lawmakers poured millions more into an increasingly expensive system that gives government more control over our health care decisions.



2007-09 operating budget

Potential tax hike looms

Since Gov. Gregoire took office, state spending has increased 33 percent. The 2007 legislative session again produced a Democrat budget with double-digit spending growth, no tax relief and no clear priorities.

They called it an "education budget," but the largest increase in spending for new programs — \$622 million, equal to 30 percent — went to the Department of Social and Health Services for social programs.

The Democrat budget spends \$1.3 billion more than the state is expected to take in. Even if the economy remains fairly strong, it will take our state from a \$2 billion surplus to a \$1.2 billion deficit in four short years, according to the governor's budget office.



Rainy-day fund a win for taxpayers

This excessive spending in the two-year budget overshadows one of the few bright spots of the session — the agreement to place a measure on the November ballot which would create a constitutional rainy-day fund. Under the plan, surplus revenues will be set aside in the fund for emergencies and to protect taxpayers from rollercoaster budgeting and economic downturns. This is a proposal Republicans have been supporting for years, and we were pleased to see it pass the Legislature.

WASL scores encouraging

More students meeting standards

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recently released the WASL scores for 2007 and thousands more students are passing the reading, writing and math portions of the WASL. Passing the reading and writing portions will be a graduation requirement beginning with the class of 2008.

While it is becoming clear that adhering to high standards and holding schools accountable is raising the level of student achievement, there are still those who want to lower expectations and water down graduation requirements. We cannot give up on our students. We will continue to work to support high standards, improve instruction and ensure the WASL is a fair measure of success.

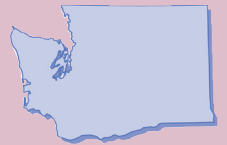
State employees get short shrift

The Legislature continues to neglect a \$5.7 billion unfunded liability in our state's pension system. Given the sizable surplus, this would have been a perfect time to make a down payment on our pension shortfall. Instead, it was ignored and will continue to cost taxpayers substantially more as interest payments increase — much like skipping payments on a mortgage.

Instead, lawmakers changed the pension laws to increase spending in other areas. They did this by eliminating the gain-

sharing benefit in state employee pensions.

We were also extremely disappointed that the Legislature has adopted a policy of discriminating against certain groups of public employees by dividing them into classes. Once again, union state employees got a pay raise in July, while nonunion state employees must wait until September. This is unfair since most state employees don't have a choice of whether or not they are part of a union.



Reps. Alexander and DeBolt played host at the Capitol to the state AA wrestling champion W.F. West Bearcats and the state 2-B girls basketball champs, the Mossyrock Vikings. Resolutions were adopted honoring the achievements of both Lewis County teams.



Rep. Gary Alexander
Rep. Richard DeBolt
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA, 98504-0600

2007 Legislative Review

PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE PAID
WA STATE DEPT
OF PRINTING 98501

Equestrian center in the works for Lewis County

One of the bright spots of the session was approval of House Bill 2388, which allows Lewis County to create a public facilities district that will aid in the planned construction of a \$60 million domed arena along Interstate 5 near Winlock. The measure, introduced by Rep. Alexander, will provide a needed economic development boost for Lewis County.



The regional equestrian center will host major rodeo and bull riding events, as well as other equestrian events and music concerts. It will also include a learning center to provide a continuing education for equine and agricultural sciences.

The project was a sentimental favorite among lawmakers this year, in part because of the well-planned partnership between private investors, the community and legislators.

More investments bring jobs to the region

Working with other lawmakers from the area, we were pleased to gain support for \$10 million in economic development funds earmarked for the Gateway project in Lacey. The project will provide the catalyst for bringing major businesses, such as Cabela's, to our local community.

We were also successful in accelerating the completion of major transportation improvements for Thurston and Lewis counties, including the addition of a third lane on I-5 from Maytown to Napavine and the construction of a new interchange at Grand Mound. These projects will be an integral part of the economic development efforts for Lewis County.

